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The Stamps of Pahlunpoor.

BY Dr. MAGNUS.

(Translated from *Le Timbre Poste.*)

Amateurs who have collected for many years are aware that at certain times, a rumor is spread about that such a country is about to adopt postage stamps. A veritable series, or some official or authentic essays hasten to confirm this rumor. But often the emission is preceded by the appearance of false stamps, humbugs, which the dishonesty of certain individuals inflicts upon the credulous community. Of these fraudulent issues, the samples of San Salvador and of Paraguay will suffice. And now we present a new case with which to entertain our readers.

During the year 1871, the English journals announced the approaching adoption of stamps for Burmah, stamps both fiscal and postal. It was, we believe, at the time when the Burmese ambassadors were visiting the different European countries. This announcement was almost forgotten, when there appeared in the *Stamp*, a new English journal, the following notice:

"Pahlunpoor (British Burmah?). We are informed that a series of

local stamps of seven values, probably the same as those of Deccan, is to be issued in a short time."

This announcement, in this dubious form, was well intended to excite public curiosity, and to concentrate it on the new emission. We are not in the confidence of the editor of the *Stamp*, but if the series which they have announced, no doubt in good faith, is the same which Mr. Moens has just sent us for examination, we do not hesitate to say that they have become the dupes of some swindler. But to come to the point at once, and without further preamble :

The so-called issue of Pahlunpoor is composed of seven stamps, all of a grey-black color, and printed by hand on laid note paper. They have a slight resemblance to the rectangular stamps of Cashmere, but the least scrutiny will disclose in the author a complete ignorance, not only of the numerous characters of the diverse languages of India, but also of the least geographical and ethnographical knowledge. Cashmere and Burmah are far apart, and are further separated by populations speaking very different languages, and particularly in their use of written characters which vary from one another and have no analogy further than a common Aryan origin and a derivation from the Sanscrit. This is the case with certain portions of the peoples of India, particularly in the north, where the people preserve the Persian as the language of poetry and literature, and have besides their peculiar idioms. Thus it happens that the stamps of the Deccan and of Cashmere bear Persian and native inscriptions. But Burmah, whether English or independent, holds more to the Mongolian race and the Chinese. "The Burmese are separated from the Hindus, not only by a narrow chain of mountains, but also by a marked difference in the two peoples. The Burmesian alphabet contains many letters which express only shades of the same sound. Their idiom is composed of Pali and Chinese." (Malte Brun.)

Burmah belongs then to Indo-China, and not to India.

The stamps which we have examined are composed of two parts, one, the outer portion which comprises the legend common to all the values, and a central part which is *considered* to contain the figure of value, this part being modified to suit the different values. There is here one very important distinction to be drawn. In the different native stamps of Asia, as those of Cashmere and Japan for instance, each value has been printed with special and complete carefulness. In the case of Japan, this fact is a little exaggerated, since each value is in plates of four stamps, all having been engraved specially, and not reproduced from a single die as is the case with European stamps. One may cite the stamps of the first issue of Shanghai; but it must be borne in mind that this was a provisional series emitted by an administration not Chinese, but Anglo-American.

The external part, the frame properly speaking, presents a kind of star which is intended to represent the lotus on the Cashmere stamp. If this lotus be placed uppermost, there will be found on each side and in a sort of pointed oval, some lines which are without doubt pretended to represent the annas (1) of Burmah. As we are not acquainted with these annas, we cannot pass condemnation on this point. Between the two ovals are characters which resemble nothing, either Indian, Persian, or Burmesan, for the Burmese use special characters. In looking over this alphabet it is found that the principal element of the letters is a circle the value of which is modified either by juxtaposition or appendices. It is the same with the numbers. This applies to the common written characters, but there is another, the Pali, introduced by the Buddhists and used for the sacred books only. This latter language resembles the Sanscrit from which it is derived; and it is from this that the Burmesan tongue has taken its origin, as the languages of the Latin races are derived from the Latin.

All the lower half of the legend presents lines more or less rounded, and points, which are doubtless intended to be Persian. From what we have said above, we may be right in asking, what has the Persian to do with this? But it is not Persian. The marks on the left resemble rather vaguely, two of the rectangular stamps of Cashmere, but the legend was reversed as on the circular stamps! On the right two lines are found that might, by a stretch of the imagination, be compared to characters denoting annas. However, it is not necessary to know the Persian language in order to stamp these characters as purely fantastic.

We now come to the central portion, and it is there the imagination of the counterfeiters has vented itself on the ignorance of collectors. The symbols are intended to represent Burmesian figures. We have before us the list of these figures from the work* of M. Piham, and we assert that the figures in the work offer no analogy to those on the stamps. M. Piham's work is drawn from the first authorities, and enjoys a well-merited reputation among Orientalists. On the contrary, the figures in these soi-disant stamps of Pahlipoor, present the greatest analogy with those of Cashmere.

Having thoroughly compared, and therefore understanding, these values, we may be permitted to point out some late facts which show what vile fraud the author of these stamps has perpetrated.

The values of the three stamps of the circular series of Cashmere are unknown to this day. Resting upon conjectures more or less reasonable, and in the absence of intelligence which Major Caracraft and Mr. Wilson have neglected to furnish, Mr. Pemberton gives the following values, depending on the colors of the impression:

*Exposé des signes de numération usités chez les peuples orientaux anciens et modernes.

(Three parallel lines) $\frac{1}{2}$ Anna.
 (A nearly vertical line) 1 "
 (A line through a crescent) 4 "

Owing to our numerous researches, the book of M. Piham, and the close scrutiny to which the Cashmere stamps have been subjected, we can say that any of the heretofore known figures bear no likeness to the three signs above given. But the figures of dates in Indian characters, on the rectangular stamps, bear a singular resemblance to Punjaub and especially Sindh numerals (the Punjaub and the Sindh are neighbors of Cashmere), which, like the Cashmere figures, are derived from the Sanscrit.

Accounts are reckoned in India by rupees, quarters of rupees, annas are their fractions. A mark resembling the numeral 3 *à guene*, placed above the value, denotes rupees; one or several vertical lines indicate quarters; and a crescent serves for annas, etc. Here is a ray of light. Applying the information to the circular stamps of Cashmere we find that the third of Pemberton's list would indicate 1 anna, the 1 having almost the form of a line in the Punjaub and Sindh numerations; the second, a quarter; and the third, three-quarters—but of what? Rupees in all probability; and this assumption is not unreasonable, for it gives to these three stamps the value of 1, 4 and 12 annas (the rupee being worth 16 annas) or about 1½d., 6d., and 18d.

It may be well to give here a few suggestions as to the manner of holding the stamps. The four Indian characters denoting "Jumoon Cashmere" should be placed uppermost, the rest of the legend, in Persian, occupying the lower portion. Thus placed the lines of the central portion will be found almost vertical.

The author of these fraudulent stamps of Pahlunpoor was evidently not aware of these little particulars, which ought to be familiar to natives. But relying on the excellent labors of Mr. Pemberton, he has taken the signs in the circular Cashmerian stamps for the values themselves, for in the rectangular series the values are expressed in letters. Also, the date in Indian characters on these latter, has served for the other values of the false stamps.

Let us now turn to the stamps themselves; and the counterfeiter has aided in deciphering their values, by indicating them in Roman figures on the reverse.

$\frac{1}{2}$ Anna—The central portion presents three parallel lines, but disposed transversely as has been done to this day, in all reproductions of the stamps of Cashmere. We have shown that these lines should be placed differently, and represent $\frac{1}{2}$ of a rupee, or 12 annas and not $\frac{1}{2}$ anna.

1 *Anna*—The central parts contains an oblique line similar to that in the second type of Cashmere, of the reputed value of 1 anna. Such a line really expresses $\frac{1}{2}$ rupee or 4 annas.

2 *Annas*—The central part contains a figure 2, but disposed from left to right, and differing completely from the placing of the 2 as seen in the Indian date of the stamps of Cashmere. Or perhaps it was intended to coarsely represent the Arabian 2, as it appears in turning the stamp, that is, with the lotos or star at the bottom.

3 *Annas*—A vague representation of the 3 from the Indian date, but reversed.

4 *Annas*—In the central portion is seen the value on the third of Pemberton's list—a line above the crescent, reputed to be 4 annas, but which we can show is only 1 anna. However, new proof of the ignorance of the counterfeiter will be seen if the lotus is placed above; the crescent surmounts the line.

8 *Annas*—This has a sort of V. He is not much of an amateur who does not know that the mark is the Arabian numeral 7; and turned upside down, the vertex above, it denotes 8. But why the Arabian or Persian characters in the midst of so many Indian?

12 *Annas*—The central part presents two symbols—a line, and a mark similar to that in the 2 annas. This is similar to the 12 annas of the Deccan, but in Arabian figures.

In conclusion, we are decidedly of the opinion that the designer of these stamps, in order to be correct as his figures, places the lotos beneath. But then the central part presents such a medley of figures—Indian, Arabian, etc.

Collectors, does not the author of such an imposition merit the pillory of public opinion? Let us then brand this conduct as ignoble, and hand down to general opprobrium the name of the fabricator, R. Cousen, of London.

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